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Editorials

Control over Nixon's aides

The Paris protocol on prisoner return provides that "all captured Vietnamese military personnel, whether belonging to regular or irregular forces, shall be returned . . . to that South Vietnamese party under whose command they served" (Art. 1); that the "two South Vietnamese parties shall exchange lists of Vietnamese civilian personnel captured and detained. . . and lists of the places at which they are held" (Art. 7c); and that all military personnel, and all Vietnamese civilian personnel, captured and detained in South Vietnam "shall be treated humanely at all times." (Art. 8 a, b).

Statements by Thieu government officials, and by U.S. sources in Saigon, indicate that each of these provisions is being violated outright by the Thieu regime, that liberation personnel, military and civilian, are being released without regard to either their inclusion on lists of prisoners, or to the requirement that captured military personnel be returned to the Provisional Revolutionary Government. All this is in complete disregard of the provision that the prisoners shall be visited, prior to release, by representatives of Red Cross societies (Art. 9 b).

At issue are not technical violations of the agreements through the alleged release of prisoners.

These reports of prisoner releases can easily serve as a coverup for a massive extermination campaign of liberation forces by the Thieu regime. Murdered prisoners, especially leading military or political personnel, can be said to have been "released" and, then, to have disappeared.

The Thieu regime would not disclose it had violated the prisoner-of-war protocol in this way if it did not count on Nixon's support. U.S. involvement is more than tacit. In his speech announcing the conclusion of the cease-fire agreement, President Nixon declared — in contradiction to the spirit and letter of the agreement — that the U.S. "will continue to recognize" the Thieu regime "as the sole legitimate Government of South Vietnam."

The very agreement he had announced is based on the existence of two "parties" in South Vietnam, the Provisional Revolutionary Government and the Thieu regime.

The peril implied in the Saigon "release" of prisoners is not conjectural. During 1972, it is estimated, Thieu's killers murdered 26,000 prisoners. All the signs are ominous. The CIA prepared a new Operation Phoenix program, labeled F-6, for the post-cease-fire period.

The situation demands an immediate response from the American people insisting that the Nixon Administration withdraw its military, political and diplomatic support from Thieu's regime; for such support encourages his murder program and provides a cover for the CIA's F-6 operation.